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TO
EDWIN BOOTH

FROM

AUGUSTIN DALY AND A. M. PALMER



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EXCERPTS

FROM THE MANY GOOD WORDS UTTERED

IN HONOR OF

EDWIN BOOTH

At the Supper given on Saturday Night, March 30, 1889, by

AUGUSTIN DALY AND A. M. PALMER.

PRINTED FOR THE PLAYERS.

NEW YORK 1889.

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A NARRATIVE

OF

THE EVENT.

(Partly from a report printed in the *New York Times* of April 1, 1889.)

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The table set in the great hall at Delmonico's on Saturday night for the supper party given by Augustin Daly and Albert M. Palmer in honor of Edwin Booth was in the form of a star. At each of the five arms were seats for fifteen gentlemen. At the apex of the northern arm sat Mr. Booth, between Mr. Daly and Mr. Palmer. Near them were General Sherman, Lawrence Barrett, Hon. Chauncey M. Depew, General Horace Porter, W. J. Florence, Constant Coquelin, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Horace Howard Furness, wisest and most amiable of Shakespearean scholars; George H. Boker, the Philadelphia poet; L. Clarke Davis, ex-Judge Charles P. Daly, Parke Godwin, and

455

S. L. Clemens. Among the actors present, besides those already named, were John Gilbert, Dion Boucicault, George Clarke, John Drew, James Lewis, John A. Lane, Ben G. Rogers, Louis Maffen, Herbert Kelcey, E. M. Holland, Alexander Salvini, Jean Coquelin, Edward Harrigan, Walden Ramsey, and Harry Edwards. Among the poets, artists, and men of letters were William Winter, Edward A. Dithmar, Appleton Morgan, Edmund Clarence Stedman, James R. Osgood, Frank Millett, J. S. Hartley, Augustus Saint Gaudens, Judge Joseph F. Daly, John H. V. Arnold, Laurence Hutton, George Parsons Lathrop, Brander Matthews, John Foord, Dr. A. Ruppaner, Stephen H. Olin, Richard Watson Gilder, Daniel Frohman, Edgar Fawcett, Brayton Ives, Stanford White, James A. Mitchell, Arthur F. Bowers, Marshall P. Wilder, Pierre T. Barlow; and the Hon. Thomas L. James, Peter Cooper Hewitt, Eugene Tompkins, G. S. Bowdoin, Marshall H. Mallory, H. C. Jarrett, Theo. E. Roefelle, William Bispham, and Hon. W. R. Grace were also numbered in the seventy-five.

The arms of the star radiated from a circular mass of roses, and flowers in rich profusion were banked in the middle of each of the five branches

of the table. A band was stationed in the balcony. The supper began at midnight. The company was good and the feast as excellent as Delmonico's kitchens could produce. Many admirable speeches were made, especially those by the Hon. Chauncey M. Depew, General Sherman, General Porter, Mr. Florence, and Lawrence Barrett; and Mark Twain discoursed on the "Long Clam."

After a few words preliminary to proposing Mr. Booth's health—responded to briefly by that gentleman—Mr. Daly resigned the chair to Mr. Palmer, who very gracefully introduced the speakers of the evening with a witty and appropriate compliment to each. The guests did not disperse until nearly five o'clock on Sunday morning.

A LETTER

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

(Addressed to Mr. Daly, after expressing regret at his inability to be present.)

. . . Were it possible I should gladly join in the tribute of honor to Mr. Booth personally, and to the ancient fraternity of which he is so eminent a member.

I once heard Mrs. Fanny Kemble say in a distinguished company, with melodious intonation, and a dignity and pride which well became the niece of Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble: "I belong to her Majesty's players."

In another sense who of us cannot say it? For their genius, their skill, their magic enchant us all, and as captives and thralls we too belong to the players. When Sir Peter Teasle and Squire Hardcastle felicitously interchange we belong to John

Gilbert. As our hearts melt in the pathetic humanity of Rip Van Winkle we are our own no longer, we are all Jefferson's. When Katherine yields to Petruchio we surrender to Ada Rehan. When Hamlet

“The expectancy and rose of the fair state,”

fills the great scene with melancholy splendor we are held fast and possessed by Edwin Booth. The players have all much more multitudinous belongings than they suspect, and never captives marched with so willing and so charmed a loyalty as theirs.

Over your hospitable table I should like to tell them so in more words, but I could not say it with greater sincerity than in this note; and with my hearty homage to your famous guest and your brilliant company, I am very truly, etc.

A SALUTE

FROM

M. CONSTANT COQUELIN.

MON CHER MONSIEUR BOOTH—Depuis le jour où vous avez débuté, vous avez été proclamé, et vous êtes resté, le premier, le grand artiste tragique de votre pays. On n'arrive pas à l'immense situation que vous vous y êtes faite sans l'avoir méritée. Vous avez eu le bonheur de n'être pas discuté, même en restant indiscutable. Les hivers ont passé sur vous sans vous toucher, et votre réputation a gardé la fraîcheur d'un jour de printemps. Ce soir, mon fils et moi, nous nous faisons un peu l'effet de deux sauvages, puisque seuls peut-être en Amérique, nous n'avons pas eu l'honneur de vous entendre ; mais nous savons fort bien ce que vous valez ; nous savons que vous êtes un artiste d'une qualité essentiellement supérieure ; un artiste qui a

trouvé la haute expression de la poésie ineffable sans faire fi de la belle réalité; nous savons aussi que vous êtes un grand esprit et un grand cœur, que vous l'avez magnifiquement prouvé. Je remercie mon ami Daly et le cher M. Palmer de nous avoir invités, afin que nous puissions nous incliner devant vous avec tous les respects qui vous sont dûs, au milieu de vos meilleurs amis, et parmi ceux qui doivent savoir le mieux vous admirer.

AN ADDRESS

BY

STEPHEN HENRY OLIN.

(In response to a call from the Chairman, Mr. A. M. Palmer.)

When I heard you begin a moment ago, Mr. Chairman, the list of "foremost men" who sit about this table, I supposed myself—the least and last of the Players' Board of Managers, for a long time safe from notice. But I am very ready to speak to the toast which you give, because, warm as are the feelings of esteem and admiration for Edwin Booth which we share with his fellow men, warmer still for most of us here to-night is the gratitude provoked by his great gift, a gift which brings to each of us present advantage and those favors to come to which gratitude is said to be most sensitive.

In the life of the modern man, the club counts for much; and in clubs of the older fashion—before

the ideal was a nocturnal stock exchange or a perennial caucus—before wits had begun to hoard all their jests for the weekly papers and when wise men had wisdom for their friends as well as for the magazines, in such clubs the actor counted for much. We find him in the coffee-houses, which were clubs in embryo; and in that bright company which at the Mitre Tavern formed what was then and is still known as *The Club*, the actor was conspicuous.

There were men whom the world is not yet weary of regarding. Sir Joshua Reynolds and Oliver Goldsmith, models still for artists and men of letters; Sheridan, wit and manager and politician; General Oglethorpe, who had learned the art of war under Prince Eugene, and whose distinction it was to found the colony of Georgia and thus set the stage on which an even greater soldier should appear; Johnson and Boswell, whose united efforts produced that "Tour in the Hebrides," which took the place filled in our more fortunate time by "The Innocents Abroad."

It might occupy philosophers or schoolboys to decide which of these men deserved best of mankind, but certainly not the least picturesque and distinguished figure was the accomplished actor

whose death was to "eclipse the gayety of nations," and who alone among that brilliant company became the namefake of a great modern club.

It is not without reason that we confidently hope for the success of our Players' Club.

We all share the bright expectations formed by your honored guest for the future of the institution of which he may well be called the founder. We see a library which shall contain the dramas of every tongue and the criticism of every time, and where, as the years go on, shall be carefully gathered the history of the stage and the biography of those who belong to it; and, as well, the anecdotes, the jests, the unconsidered trifles of the player's life. We see a museum in which shall be stored the pictures of plays and the portraits of the men and women who win renown in their performance, and we see this library and museum not set apart for the occasional use of the studious, but brought into the actor's daily life, made the home alike of the veteran of the stage and the ambitious recruit. We see the refining influence of art and literature aided by the stimulus of example, the power of tradition, and the encouragement of chosen friendships and associations. All this, we believe, will make for the lasting good of American dramatic art—of that prudish

Anglo-Saxon art which cares for the Beautiful and the True, but cares for the Good as well. In that house shall be virtue, and there shall also be abundant cakes and ale.

This prospect is plain before us all, but there are other things in the future of this foundation which we see better than does its founder. It will perpetuate his fame, not as a monument guards a buried treasure, but as a living organism preserves what it holds dear.

The stage is the only form of art which among English speaking men has a permanent hierarchy. In painting, sculpture, music, architecture, poetry, one great man succeeds another to whom he owes little or nothing; one school is followed by another differing and divergent. But it happened that when the English language was yet young, while it was pent within the limits of a little island, when it had gathered up its mighty forces but had not yet begun to spend them over all the earth, it was touched by the wand of a great enchanter. All at once, perfect and complete, the English drama came to life. Some greater genius may, perhaps, hereafter live, but he can no more rival Shakespeare than the prophet of an Eastern tribe can now displace Mohammed between heaven and all the scattered

peoples of Islam. To the end of time when anyone shall say "Great is the English drama," he will reverently add "And Shakespeare is its prophet."

The dramatist, unlike other artists, does not address directly those whom he would affect, and so it has come to pass that men gain fame and fortune because they, better than their fellows, can speak the words of the great master, can make his creations move again upon the stage, can in his name touch those fibres of our Anglo-Saxon nature which in some sort he created, and which vibrate most strongly at his call.

There are students of history here to-night who can name the chiefs of this honored priesthood as they stretch back in unbroken succession, in continuity of tradition and teaching, to the men who studied their partitions in Shakespeare's crabbed handwriting. It is not for me to point out how clear has been the title of Edwin Booth to this primacy, since it came to him from his father's hand; but I can say that it is well that his fame should be not only left to his countrymen, but particularly in the keeping of an ever renewed company of his friends. For years, for generations perhaps more numerous than we venture to im-

agine, will glow at the mention of his name the sympathy and affection which on New Year's eve burned up so brightly around the newly-lighted hearth of the Players.

A TRIBUTE

BY

WILLIAM WINTER.

(Delivered at the supper of March 30th, and printed in the *Tribune*, April 7th.)

It was my fortune, many years ago, to be present in the old Boston Theatre on a night when that famous American actor Edwin Forrest, at the close of an exceedingly brilliant engagement, represented *Hamlet* and delivered a farewell address. I can see him now, as I saw him then—not the most intellectual nor the most brilliant figure in our theatrical history, but certainly the most colossal, the most imposing, the most definite, impressive, inspired animal individuality that ever has been seen upon the American stage; and I can hear his voice as I then heard it, when, as he gazed around upon a vast assemblage of the public and upon the stage that

was literally covered with flowers, he said—in those magnificent, vibrating, organ tones of his, which never in our day have been equalled or approached—“Here, indeed, is a miracle of culture—a wilderness of roses, and not a single thorn!” To-night it is my fortune to be present at this memorable feast of tribute to genius and virtue, and to behold his great and famous successor in the leadership of tragic art in America, surrounded by friends who greet him with affection no less than homage, and who honor themselves rather than him by every denotement of respect and appreciation they possibly can give to Edwin Booth: and I can imagine that he also, looking upon your eager, happy, affectionate faces, and listening to your genial eloquence—in this scene of light and perfume and joy, of high thought and sweetly serious feeling and gentle mirth—may utter the same exclamation of grateful pride—“Here, indeed, is a miracle of culture—a wilderness of roses, and not a single thorn!”

For if a man eminent in public life and illustrious in the realm of art may not indulge a sentiment of honest pride and grateful exultation at such a moment as this I know not when he may indulge it. Honors are sometimes given where they are not due; but in those cases although they are accepted

they are not enjoyed. In the present instance they flow as naturally and as rightly to the object of our esteem as rivers flow to the sea. Edwin Booth adopted the profession of the stage when he was in his sixteenth year and he has been actor close on forty years. Looking back upon that long career of ambitious and noble labor and achievement I think he must be conscious—I know that we who have observed and studied it are conscious—that he has been animated in every minute of it by the passionate desire, not to magnify and glorify himself, but, through the ministration of a great and beautiful art, to stimulate the advancement of others, to increase the stock of harmless pleasure, to make the world happier and nobler, and to leave the stage a better institution than it was when he found it. Speaking with reference to actors in general it might perhaps justly be said that it is the infirmity of each one of them to consider himself as the centre of a solar system around which everything else in the creation revolves. Not so with the guest of this occasion, the hero of this festal hour—the favorite of our fancy and the comrade of our love! For he “has borne his faculties so meek, has been so clear in his great office,” that whether on the golden summits of prosperity or in the valley of the

shadow of loss and sorrow his gentle humility of disposition, his simple fidelity to duty, his solid sincerity of self-sacrificing character, and his absolutely guileless and blameless conduct of life have been equally conspicuous with his supreme dramatic genius, his artistic zeal and his glittering renown. Edwin Booth's fame is assured, and I think it stands now at its height; and no artistic fame of our generation can be accounted brighter; but to my mind the crowning glory of it is the plain fact that an occasion like this—representative to him of the universal sentiment and acclamation of his time—is simply the spontaneous acknowledgment that grateful sincerity awards to genuine worth. My words about him, on another festival occasion in this same place may fitly be repeated now:

Though skies might gloom and tempests rave,
Though friends and hopes might fall,
His constant spirit simply brave
Would meet and suffer all—
Would calmly smile at fortune's frown,
Supreme o'er gain or loss:
And he the worthiest wears the crown
That gently bore the cross!

It was not to tell Edwin Booth that he is a great actor, and it was not to tell him that he is dear to

the hearts of his friends, that this assemblage has been convened. The burning of incense is a delightful and often a righteous occupation, and of all the duties that your Shakespeare has taught there is no one that he urges with more strenuous ardor than that of whole-hearted admiration for everything that is noble and lovely in human nature and conduct. Him at least you never find niggard and reticent in his praise. But, as I apprehend it, the motive of this occasion was the desire to express, for our own sake, our sense of obligation to Edwin Booth for the lesson of his life. As the years drift away, as the shadows begin to slope to the eastward, the first faint mists mingle with the light of the sinking sun, nothing impresses me so much as the imperative need that we should preserve the illusions of a youthful spirit and look upon this world not in the cold and barren light of fact but through the golden haze of the imagination and the genial feelings. To some men and women it is granted that they can diffuse this radiant glamour of ideal charm. Like a delicate perfume that suddenly comes upon you from a withered rose, or a bit of ribbon, or a tress of hair, long hallowed and long preserved; like a faint, far-off strain of music that floats on a summer breeze across the moonlit sea, they touch

the spirit with a sense of the beauty and glory, the mystery and the pathos of our existence, and we are lifted up and hallowed and strengthened, and all that is bitter in our experience and fordid in our surroundings is soothed and sweetened and glorified. They teach us hope and belief, instead of doubt and despondency; and thus, in a world of trouble and sorrow, giving to us the human patience and the spiritual nobility which more than anything else we need, they

“Shed a something of celestial light
Round the familiar face of every day.”

It is because Edwin Booth has been in this way a blessing to his generation that we are met to thank him; and furthermore it is because in a period that greatly requires nobility of practical example he is a vital and influential and conclusive proof that an actor may know and may fulfil his duty to his time. What that duty is you will not expect any speaker here to describe. I will but ask you to recall what the American stage was when he came upon it thirty years ago, and to consider what it is now and to whose influence mainly its advancement is due. And I will but add that when you stand beneath the stupendous majesty of St. Paul's Cathedral and

look upon the marble which commemorates its great architect you may read one sentence that is the perfect flower of simplicity and eloquence—"If you would behold his monument, look around you!"

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